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FRIDAY, MAY 21, 1943

SUBJECT: WEEDS FOR THE DINNER TABLE." Information from home economists and extension workers of the U.S.Department of Agriculture.

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Our pioneer grandmothers had to meet many a food shortage and emergency. One way they managed to feed their families in those early difficult times was to make the most of the food gifts of nature. They learned what the forests and fields had to offer in the way of free foods and made the most of these offerings from the time the first wild greens came up in the spring until the last wild nut fell in the fall.

In spring they concentrated on wild greens. They didn't know about minerals and vitamins, of course, but they knew from experience that the fresh spring greens were good for their families. And they knew how to choose many different greens.

Some of this lore has come down through the years. Here is a quaint note written in spring from a school in the Kentucky Mountains. It says: "Country folk are looking for a sunshiny day to gather wild greens, a longed-for relish for those who must live all winter on dried, pickled or buried fruits and vegetables. At dinner the other day we rehearsed the spring greens that might go into the gatherer's basket--crowfoot, speckledick, poke, plantain, lamb's quarters, cow's glory, dandelion, wild mustard, elder leaves, goose's tooth, bear's lettuce, wild turnip, dock and woollen breaches. A blend of any half dozen of these will make a bait of sallet indeed. The very names make folks's mouths water here."

This note from the Kentucky Mountains might well be a tip for all who can reach the good greens now ready in vacant lots, along roadsides and streams, in fields and woods. Many of the more tender, delicately flavored, young leaves are good with salad dressing of vinegar and oil or bacon fat. And many are delicious cooked as you cook greens from the garden. The green leaves give you vitamin A as well as iron and some of the B vitamins. The parts to eat usually are young leaves and tender tips of stems. Of course, you need to be sure wild greens are edible before you serve them to the family. If in doubt, ask your State college of agriculture or your county agricultural agent.

Use the greens as soon as possible after gathering because they wilt more quickly than other greens and lose vitamins as they wait and wilt.

When you get the greens home, pick them over, discarding roots and wilted or damaged leaves. Wash them carefully as you do spinach in cold water, lifting them out so the dirt drains off and using several changes of water. Don't leave greens soaking in water, because they lose food value that way.

Of course, you get the most vitamin value when you eat greens raw. For a spring salad try a pint of young, tender dandelion leaves, shredded fine with scissors...or young chicory leaves...chopped onion and parsley...slices of radish...perhaps slices of hard-cooked eggs and pickled beet.

Cook wild greens like garden greens. Strong-flavored greens taste best if you cook them 2 or 3 minutes in a generous amount of boiling water...then drain off the water...and cook again in a small amount of lightly salted boiling water. Cook quickly...just until the leaves wilt and the greens become tender. Never overcook. Never use soda.

Another way to cook young tender greens is to pan them. Put a little fat in a frying pan...then the greens...cover the pan...cook slowly 15 or 20 minutes...season with salt and pepper, maybe a few drops of lemon juice or vinegar...maybe also onion juice.